

## **PLANNING SCOTLAND'S SEAS**

### **NATURE CONSERVATION MARINE PROTECTED AREAS**

#### **CONSULTATION RESPONSE FROM COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR**

The consultation response from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar concentrates on general questions and specific questions relating to proposed Marine Protected Areas in Outer Hebrides waters.

#### **1. Do you support the development of an MPA network in Scotland's Seas?**

Yes  No

The desire to establish a network of Marine Protected Areas in Scotland by the Scottish Government is understood. However there is a wide range of interests in coastal and sea areas and a desire that all those interests - economic, social, cultural and environmental - should be meaningfully recognised in any environmental designation process. At this stage environmental concerns appear to more strongly influence the outcome of the assessment process. More work is required to fully understand the impact of designations at a local level through consultation and discussion with a wide range of local stakeholders.

Under the Our Islands Our Future initiative the Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland recognise that Islands by their very nature are special places with special requirements and call for a commitment that the needs and status of the island areas are clearly recognised.

The three islands group believe that the principle of subsidiarity should be at the heart of policy development across the islands. Applying the principle of subsidiarity will give the three islands group the opportunity and responsibility to provide the services and carry out the functions appropriate to their communities. It will also give the power to develop initiatives and introduce strategies to meet the special needs of their areas and ensure sustainable economic growth.

The current consultation on the National Marine Plan has been preceded by proposals for Scottish Marine Regions which would see each of the three island groups have a distinct Scottish Marine Region for their surrounding inshore waters (0-12 nautical miles).

At the same time the three islands group wish an active part in the planning and managing of development and exploitation of resources in and around their respective shores in order to ensure they benefit their communities without compromising the local environment.

To achieve sustainable development of the islands resources Comhairle nan Eilean Siar feels that the identification of Marine Protected Areas can

only be made whilst assessing economic and social features at the same time and the impact of any proposed management measures. This assessment needs to be done on a local basis either independently of development of Scottish Marine Regions or as part of it.

Clarity is sought as to the regulatory status of possible Marine Protected Areas other than possible Special Areas of Conservation (pSAC) and possible Special Protection Areas (pSPA). It is unclear whether proposed elements of the MPA network not designated at European level are to be treated as if designated prior to confirmation of the designation.

## **Individual possible Nature Conservation MPAs**

### **2. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Clyde Sea Sill* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**3. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *East Caithness Cliffs* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**4. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *East of Gannet and Montrose Fields* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**5. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Faroe-Shetland sponge belt* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**6. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Fetlar to Haroldswick* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**7. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Hatton-Rockall Basin* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**8. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Loch Creran* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**9. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Loch Sunart* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**10. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Loch Sunart to the Sound of Jura* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**11. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Loch Sween* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**12. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Lochs Duich, Long and Aish* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**13. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Monach Isles* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

The activities which have been identified as feature sensitive reflect only those activities undertaken at a point in time.

For activities considered capable of affecting the protected features and related management options, in relation to static gear pressures, no distinction is made between surface set nets and bottom set nets. Although it is not thought that set net activity is currently undertaken in the area this is related to the introduction of Emergency Cod Recovery Measures prevented bottom set net activity. With the hoped for removal of these Emergency Measures it is important that fishing activity which would not result in feature pressure can be assessed and resumed if it has no impact on the feature. Therefore distinction needs to be made between the two activities.

This also emphasises an important point about how proposed management measures can be assessed and adapted to changing circumstances. It is essential that site-based measures can change over time as environmental changes occur and that these changes are not restricted to consideration at the end of the six year monitoring cycle. Opportunities must be available for local stakeholders to inform and justify management measure changes on an individual feature basis.

The Comhairle believes that increased local accountability and control is critical to the future management of pressures on the marine environment. The Outer Hebrides are highly dependent on marine resources and on the quality of the marine and coastal environment. The economy of the islands requires to be strengthened and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is committed to sustainable economic development of its coastal and marine resources.



It is important that local stakeholders are consulted in full about feature sensitivities and any management proposals. The Comhairle has conveyed clearly to the Scottish Government on many occasions that it is not supportive of new designations that have a negative economic impact being imposed on communities in the Outer Hebrides.

**14. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Mousa to Boddam* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**15. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *North-east Faroe Shetland Channel* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above:

Yes  No

Comments

**16. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *North-west Orkney* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation:

Yes  No

Comments

Management Options:

Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes  No

Comments

All of the above:

Yes  No

Comments

**17. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *North-west sea lochs and Summer Isles* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation:

Yes  No

Comments

Management Options:

Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**18. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Noss Head* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**19. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Papa Westray* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**20. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Rosemary Bank Seamount* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above: Yes  No

Comments

**21. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Small Isles* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation: Yes  No

Comments

Management Options: Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes  No

Comments

All of the above:

Yes  No

Comments

**22. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *South Arran* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation:

Yes  No

Comments

Management Options:

Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes  No

Comments

All of the above:

Yes  No

Comments

**23. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for *The Barra Fan and Hebrides Terrace Seamount* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation:

Yes  No

Comments

Management Options:

Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes  No

Comments

All of the above:

Yes  No

Comments

**24. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Turbot Bank* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation:

Yes  No

Comments

Management Options:

Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes  No

Comments

All of the above:

Yes  No

Comments

**25. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Upper Loch Fyne and Loch Goil* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation:

Yes  No

Comments

Management Options:

Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes  No

Comments

All of the above:

Yes  No

Comments

**26. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *West Shetland Shelf (formerly Windsock)* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation:

Yes  No

Comments

Management Options:

Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes  No

Comments

All of the above:

Yes  No

Comments

**27. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Wyre and Rousay Sounds* possible Nature Conservation MPA?**

Designation:

Yes  No

Comments

Management Options:

Yes  No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes  No

Comments

All of the above:

Yes  No

Comments



## **Choices to represent features in the MPA Network**

**28. Recognising the scientific advice from JNCC included alternatives for representing offshore subtidal sands and gravels, ocean quahog and shelf banks and mounds in the Southern North Sea, do you have a preference or comments on the following combinations to represent these features, bearing in mind Turbot Bank will need to be designated to represent sandeel in this region:**

- Firth of Forth Banks Complex
- Turbot bank and Norwegian Boundary Sedimentary Plain
- Or Firth of Forth Banks Complex, Turbot bank and Norwegian Boundary Sedimentary Plain

Comments

**Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessments for the preference you have indicated in the question above, regarding alternatives for representing offshore subtidal sands and gravels, ocean quahog and shelf banks and mounds in the Southern North Sea?**

Yes  No

Comments

**29. Recognising the scientific advice from JNCC included alternatives for representing the burrowed mud feature in the Fladens, do you have a preference or comments on the following combinations to represent these features, bearing in mind the part of Central Fladen (known as Central Fladen (Core)) containing tall seapen (*Funiculina quadrangularis*) will need to be designated to represent tall seapen in this region:**

- Central Fladen pMPA only
- The tall sea-pen component of Central Fladen, plus Western Fladen
- Or the tall sea-pen component of Central Fladen, plus South-East Fladen.

Comments

**30. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessments for the preference you have indicated in the question above, regarding alternatives for representing the burrowed mud feature in the Fladens?**

Yes  No

Comments

**31. Recognising the scientific advice from JNCC included alternatives for representing offshore subtidal sands and gravels, offshore deep sea mud, and burrowed mud in OSPAR Regions III and V, do you have a preference or comments on the following combinations to represent these features:**

South-West Sula Sgeir and Hebridean slope  
Or Geikie slide and Hebridean slope

Comments

**32. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessments for the preference you have indicated in the question above, regarding alternatives for representing offshore subtidal sands and gravels, offshore deep sea mud, and burrowed mud in OSPAR Regions III and V?**

Yes  No

Comments

## **Sustainability Appraisal**

**33. Do you have any comments on the Sustainability Appraisal of the MPA network as a whole?**

Yes  No

Through Marine Protected Area designation there is potential for displacement of fishing activities to other sea areas which may result in increased pressure on biodiversity interests in those areas. This displacement effect is uncertain and not quantified with further consultation with local stakeholders and information required to assess.

## **Final Thoughts**

**34. On the basis of your preferences on which pMPAs should be designated, do you view this to form a complete or ecologically coherent network, subject to the completion and recommendations of SNH's further work on the 4 remaining search locations?**

Yes  No

No comment

**35. Do you have any other comments on the case for designation, management options, environmental or socioeconomic assessments of the pMPAs, or the network as a whole?**

Yes  No

Further consideration of local impact will be required once the assessment of the two further MPA Search Locations is concluded. Analysis of the cumulative impact on the economy, society, culture and the environment as a result of proposed designation must be undertaken before a conclusion is reached preferably through the development of Scottish Marine Regions.

In addition in respect of other proposed nature MPA areas, a number are outwith the waters of the Outer Hebrides but which still play an important role to the local economy especially the fishing sector. Any management

measures proposed for those areas must acknowledge and recognise the historic impact of existing activity, or lack of, on the identified features. With the Monach Isles as an example existing fishing activity has had little or no impact on the feature and this appropriate, existing level of activity should be allowed to continue. Similarly in relation to the proposed MPA for the Small Isles management measures must reflect what is appropriate for the feature to be protected. In many cases existing fishing activity has not impacted on features as it does not target the same areas as the features or is at such a level that that both feature and activity can co-exist and have done for many years. However the feature must be protected against more intensive activities which have no historic pattern in the area or which potentially impact more heavily on features i.e. larger horse power vessels with heavier gear